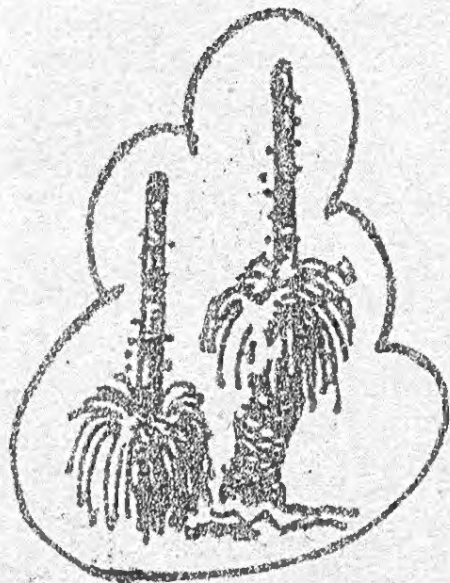


FIELD NATURALISTS' CLUB OF BALLARAT.

EXCURSION/NEWS SHEET - JUNE 1978.



President-	Mr. G. Binns	Ph. 323670
Vice-Pres-	Mr. R. Borch	428630
Secretary-	Miss H. Burgess	312210
Treasurer-	Mr. S. Reynolds	327721

Meetings held in the Administrative Building at the School of Mines, Lydiard St. Sth. (unless otherwise stipulated), first Friday of each month at 8 p.m.

MEETING: 2nd June - Mr. P. Day. Geology and Natural History of the Ballarat Area.

MEETING: 7th July - Mr. D. White- Wetlands Management- Clunes Project. Venue- St. Pauls Hall, Hopetoun Street. (From Victoria St. turn right into East St, right again into Hopetoun St. Entrance to St. Pauls Hall is at the end of the street. Parking area available).

JUNE EXCURSIONS: 4th June- Creswick (half day) Fungi, Eucalypts. Leader A. Sonsee. 17th June- Invermay (half day) Fungi. Leader F. Chuk.

JULY EXCURSIONS: 9th July- Linton B.O.C. Paddock- Working Bee. (G. Clarke) Leaving Crockers corner 9.30 a.m. 22nd July- Nerrina (Half day). Leader P. Murphy.

ROCK PLANTS IN AUSTRALIA.

At our May meeting Dr. Heather Dick gave a talk on Alpine plants and ground covers, growing in natural settings and in private gardens. Hints on propagating and growing were also given with comments regarding situation and moisture requirements. Dr. Dick showed a selection of slides, some taken on Mt. Kosciusko (7,000 ft.) and the Bogong High Plains (5,000 ft.) in Alpine and sub-alpine conditions. Some of the slides were of treasures in her own garden and those of her friends.

Mention was made of the battle conservationists have with sawmillers and graziers, to keep the mountains from being eaten out in droughts, and the habitat destroyed. Fenced off areas show how quickly regeneration takes over.

Some of the rock plants suitable for gardens were *Hibbertia procumbens* and *H. obtusifolia* (pretty yellow flowers); *Helichrysum baxteri*, a small shrub with white flowers; *Brachycombe iberidifolia*, *B. aculeata* and *B. rigidula* (blue, lavender or pink daisy flowers). Some of the ground covers were *Myoporum parvifolium*; *Ewartia nubigena*; *Scleranthus biflorus*; *Neopaxia australasica*; *Selliera radicans*.

Many other excellent slides were shown and members enjoyed the beauty of the Alpine areas, and Dr. Dick's lucid and entertaining commentary. Mrs. Kierath moved a vote of thanks which was carried with acclamation. B.G.

MAY 7th EXCURSION was to Nerrin Nerrin and Wongan Lakes and was attended by seven carloads. The first stop was at the Eel Factory at Skipton, where a comprehensive tour was conducted by Mr. Peter Vanderdrift.

We were told the life cycle of eels is an unusual one. The exact location of the spawning grounds is unknown but appears to be in deep waters in the Coral Sea. Larval eels, known as leptocephali, are carried by oceanic currents. Near the coast they metamorphose into "glass-eels" completely free from pigment. The elvers, fully pigmented young eels, develop quickly from the "glass-eel" stage, and movement into rivers and lakes follows. They remain in rivers and lakes 10 to 20 years, until mature. With maturity the seaward (downstream) migration to the spawning grounds begins. They lose their gut to make way for the reproductive organs, and if prevented from reaching the sea, regrow their gut and become feeding eels once again. Mature eels under 52 cm are males and mature females are always over 52 cm.

Two species of eels are found in Victorian inland waters. The short finned, *Anguilla australis* and the long finned, *Anguilla reinhardti*. The former is of major

commercial importance, forming about 98% of the annual eel catch. The eels are cleaned out in running water tanks at the factory before snap freezing. Most are exported, a small quantity being held back to be smoked for the local market.

Lunch was eaten in the sunshine beside Lake Jolicum. Numerous swans were grazing on the grass beside it. Our bird list for the Nerrin Nerrin Lakes included Swans, Coots, Egret, Pelicans, Brown Falcon, Grey Teal, Whistling Kite, large Black Cormorants, Little Grebe, Yellow Spoon-bill, Black Duck, Goldfinch, Little Pied Cormorant, Pied Stilts, Magpie, Noisy Miner, Magpie Lark, Red-backed Parrot, Black-fronted Dotterel, Tree Martins, Pipit, Willy Wagtail, White-faced Heron, Australian Plover, 12 Chestnut-breasted Shell Ducks and 6 Mallard.

We inspected "The Drop" or weir which controls entry of water into the lakes.

As a fitting finale we went to Lake Wongan where White-headed Stilts and a Brown Song Lark were added to our list. Our grateful thanks go to Mr. John Clements for ably leading the excursion.

J. Spicer.

PRESERVATION OF THE ALPINE AREA.

There is no doubt that the Land Conservation Council's Proposed Recommendations for the Alpine Area have been influenced by lobbies and possibly political pressures. Unless concerned people demonstrate their concern, the conservation possibilities of the Alps will be lost for all time.

The proposed recommendations are open for comment by interested organizations and members of the public. Any submissions received by the Council will be considered in conjunction with the formulation of its final Recommendations to the Government. The closing date for submissions is 12th June 1978. They should be made direct to the Land Conservation Council at 464 St. Kilda Road, Melbourne 3004. (A copy of the L.C.C. Proposed Recommendations for the Alpine Area is available from the Secretary)

ILLABAROOK - DEVIL'S KITCHEN - SNAKE VALLEY.

One afternoon recently Helen, Florence and I went through Cape Clear to explore a natural strip of bushland at the former Illabarook Railway station. There are particularly fine specimens of *Banksia marginata* and *Casuarina stricta*, some Cherry ballart, Golden Wattle (*A. pycnantha*), with pockets of Cranberry Heath (*Astroloma humifusum*) in flower.

We went on to the Devil's Kitchen, a roam through bushland in the vicinity of Mt. Erip and called at the C.E.B.'s camp at Snake Valley on the way home. The latter is a very neat and convenient complex, in bushland beside a lake, and should be ideal for the proposed W.V.F.N.C.A. Camp-Out which is to be hosted by our Club on 20/22nd October. The Camp is 5 km north of Linton (which is on the Glenelg Highway approximately 40 km south of Ballarat) and 3 km south of Snake Valley.

The bird list for the afternoon - Brown Goshawk, Little Ravens, Yellow-tailed Thornbills, Eastern Rosella, Goldfinch, Mudlark, Kookaburra, Scarlet Robin, Tree Martin, Crimson Rosella, Wattle Bird, Grey Thrush, Spur-winged Plover, White-faced and White-necked Herons, Pied Cormorant, Black Swans, Coots and Grey Teal. B.G.

A GENTLE REMINDER!!

The printing and distribution of our Syllabus Cards was made possible by the generosity and sponsorship of Mr. V. James of Begonia City Drive-In Nursery, Learmonth Road, Wendouree, 3355. (Ph. 392055).

Your patronage of this excellent garden centre would be the most practical way by which you may show your appreciation.

POSER FOR NATIONAL PARKS RANGERS. From a recent edition of "Reader's Digest".

"What happens if a Ranger was to see an endangered animal eating an endangered plant specimen?"

AUTUMN ON KANGAROO ISLAND.

Kangaroo Island 16 km from the mainland at Cape Jervis, is approximately 145 km long and averages 32 km in width. The island is accessible from Adelaide by a 6 hour boat journey or $\frac{1}{2}$ hour flight by plane. There are two airlines serving the island and as we were to stay at American River, we flew at 3,000 ft. in a nine seater Cessna - a very pleasant way to see the sea and east coast of St. Vincent's Gulf. The plane has been known to fly low over the runway at American River to scatter the sheep, the pilot then makes a second approach to land.

Agriculture and tourism supply the island's economy and there is a population of just over 3,000. Kingscote, the main tourist centre, is historically significant, being the site of the first settlement. There is an ancient mulberry tree which was planted in 1836. American River is a fishing resort, and near Pelican Lagoon and Penneshaw, on the Dudley Peninsula, east end of the island, are the other tourist centres. Parndana, in the middle of the island, is the centre for the Soldier Settlements.

The roads are mostly well graded gravel with a small section sealed near Kingscote. The roads, particularly in the central and southern areas are lined with dense mallee-type vegetation which contains dozens of species of flora and fauna. Views of the surrounding country are few except near the south coast where the vegetation is very stunted. To the north the rainfall is higher and there are many tall trees. With little roadside vegetation wonderful vistas of the gently rolling hills can be had.

The coastline varies from fascinating steep limestone cliffs with stalagmite and stalagmite formations well worn by the pounding seas, to sandy beaches, some so hard that cars may be driven on them, and many pebbly beaches. Some beaches were devoid of birds and others had a great variety.

Many of the roads contained carcasses of kangaroos, wallabies, brush tailed possums, a snake and echidnas, hit by speeding motorists. Eagles and other carrion were assured of adequate feed. Two echidnas were about to cross the road as we approached and changed their mind when we stopped, and curled up into spiny balls at the foot of a eucalypt - they were not to know I only wanted to "shoot" them for posterity.

Flinders Chase, the largest National Park in South Australia, situated at the west end of the island is a delightful spot. The original homestead at Rocky River now provides accommodation to the visitor to the Park. There is an area set aside for campers and picnickers are advised to eat in the enclosure provided or they could find their meal has been more than shared by the over-friendly sooty kangaroos and emus. Koalas have been introduced to the Park and rows of manna gums planted especially for them. Cape Barren Geese also abound on the grassy flats near the homestead. Platypus are to be seen in the Rocky River, but time did not permit a patient exploration, but we did see a brush turkey, not endemic to the island. Time spent in exploring the Park would be most rewarding.

Flowers were few, but Spring on the Island should be most colourful. Melaleucas grow large and provided good windbreaks. Xanthorrhoea tateana was seen in great profusion, but only flowering where there was evidence of recent fires. There are 50 species of orchids known on the island, but we did not see any. Some plants are endemic to Kangaroo Island, among them two Eucalypts and a Melaleuca.

It is very dry this year, the dams are almost empty, but for a holiday the weather was ideal - very mild and calm with the odd shower of rain.

We saw many birds, but they were too quick for positive identification.

A Bird List for the Island is as follows:

Native Birds.

Hoary-headed Grebe
Black Cormorant
Pelican
Pied Cormorant
White Faced Heron
White Ibis
Chestnut Teal
Black Swan
Musk Duck
Blue Billed Duck
Black Shouldered Kite
Wedge Tailed Eagle
Osprey
Stubble Quail
Pied Oystercatcher
Sooty Oystercatcher
Spur-winged Plover
Banded Dotterel
Common Sandpiper
Sanderling
Silver Gull
Pacific Gull
Caspian Tern
Dominican Gull
Crested Tern
Glossy Black Cockatoo
Little Corella
Crimson Rosella
Boobook Owl
Welcome Swallow
Tree Martin
Australian Pipit
Black Faced Cuckoo Shrike
White Fronted Chat
Brown Thornbill
Superb Blue Wren
Restless Fly Catcher
Grey Fantail.

(Contributed H. Burgess)

Introduced Native Birds.

Willie Wagtail
Scarlet Robin
Flame Robin
Grey Shrike Thrush
Striated Pardalote
Grey-backed Silvereye
Singing Honeyeater
White Plumed Honeyeater
White Eared Honeyeater
Yellow Winged Honeyeater
Red Wattle Bird
Beautiful Firetail
Magpie Lark
Black-winged Currawong
Dusky Woodswallow
Little Raven
White-backed Magpie
Banded Landrail
Brush Turkey
Emu
Cape Barren Goose

Introduced Exotic Birds

Goldfinch
House Sparrow
Peacock
Starling

BIRD STUDY.

The Victorian Ornithological Research Group Conference is to be held at venues in and near Heidelberg, Melbourne, on 21, 22, 23 July, 1978.

Conference sessions include speakers on Ornithological Research and Collections, Bird Behavior, Identification, Nests, Bird Study method, and also discussion panels.

Registration fee for the whole conference is \$25.

Correspondence and Enquiries to:

VORG Secretariat,
P.O. Box 203,
South Melbourne. Vic. 3205.

or Phone: (03) 49 1165, (03) 80 2705

Copies of the Conference details are available from the Secretary of our Club.

OBITUARY

As this newsletter goes to print, the Committee has been informed of the death of our highly esteemed member and friend Stella Bedggood, at Ballarat on Saturday 27 May.

On behalf of the Club, our deepest sympathy is extended to her family at this time.

In addition to her service as secretary of our Club for thirteen years Stella will be remembered as an outstanding field naturalist, photographer and an untiring worker for the conservation of our natural environment.
